



## *Senate Press Office*

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release:  
January 18, 2007

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## **Statement from Sen. Johnson on dismissal of ethics charge against Speaker Richardson**

“Pursuant to the Rules of the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee, I appointed a bi-partisan Review Committee to determine whether the complaint filed by the Chairman of the Georgia Democratic Party against Speaker Glenn Richardson warranted action by the full Committee. The Review Committee functions like a Grand Jury in our judicial system and filters the frivolous from the serious charges.

“The Review Committee included myself, Senator George Hooks (D-Americus) and Representative Lynn Smith (R-Newnan). Senator Hooks is a respected Democrat and the Dean of the Senate. Representative Smith serves as a citizen member of the State Bar of Georgia’s Disciplinary Panel and is familiar with handling serious, sensitive charges.

“The Review Committee met and determined that there was insufficient evidence to warrant full committee action. The vote was unanimous and Chairman Kahn has been mailed a letter to that effect. Speaker Richardson was given a copy. Normally, by rule, the actions taken by the Committee are confidential. However, the Speaker has authorized me to comment on this case.

“The Joint Legislative Ethics Committee was established to look at charges of conflict of interest involving Legislators and Legislative staff and to recommend appropriate action if a conflict has occurred. We take our new responsibilities very seriously. However, we cannot look into vague charges based on gossip and rumor without any evidence supporting the charge. To do so would turn this Committee into a circus and invite kooks and partisans to file false charges. If the Chairman of the Georgia Republican Party had sent a similar letter attacking a prominent Democrat, our response would be the same.

“The Joint Legislative Ethics Committee must not allow itself to be used for partisan political purposes. The fact that the Chairman of a political party makes vague accusations against a leader of the other party on the weekend before the inauguration and the opening day of the session clearly indicates the motivation behind the charge. It should insult the people of Georgia and embarrass those who take the political process seriously.

“I am confident that Chairman Kahn’s next script will claim “whitewash” and “cover up.” That is what he planned all along. He knows we cannot pursue undocumented charges. He is simply manipulating the process and the media. All I can ask is that the media treat rumor as rumor and fact as fact. The fact is there is no evidence of any wrong doing. The fact is the claim came from the Chairman of the opposition party, not a concerned citizen with firsthand knowledge. The fact is that this Committee cannot allow itself to be used to perpetuate rumors or be used for partisan purposes. The fact is there are no facts!

“The full Committee will do its job when the facts warrant it.”

Senator Eric Johnson  
President Pro Tempore  
2007 Chairman of the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee

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*Sen. Eric Johnson is the President Pro Tempore of the State Senate. He represents Senate District One, which includes Bryan County and a portion of Chatham and Liberty counties. He may be reached by e-mail at [eric.johnson@senate.ga.gov](mailto:eric.johnson@senate.ga.gov) or at 404.656.5109.*